

IV. PLANNING BACKGROUND IN WAUPACA AND PORTAGE COUNTIES

The search for a location for the Ice Age NST in Portage and Waupaca Counties began in the 1970's by individuals, organizations, and government agencies in Stevens Point. They first looked at the terminal moraine, or "Hancock" moraine, which is located just 6-8 miles east of Stevens Point. During the 70's they worked to establish trail with landowner permission along this moraine as well as at Standing Rock County Park. However, it was soon discovered that the moraine was rapidly being covered with exurban development by its large urban neighbor. This made the goal of a continuous trail along this route very difficult.

In the early to mid-1980's, the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation began to look at different route alignments for the trail in central Wisconsin, particularly between Devil's Lake and Stevens Point. At this time they also began to organize local trail chapters in Portage and Waupaca Counties. These trail chapters assumed the critical role of collecting data to identify a preferred route as well as raising the awareness of the trail throughout both counties.

As trail planners reviewed the geologic, biologic and aesthetic resource information for the area, their attention shifted from the Hancock moraine east to the Elderon moraines on the Portage/Waupaca county line. The county line location was appealing because of its diversity of glacial features; scenic landscape that would provide for an outstanding hiking experience; and extensive stretches of public land, such as found in Hartman Creek State Park and Emmons Creek State Fishery Area. Both chapters began to obtain handshake agreements and written permission to construct the trail in this area. Today over 20 miles of the trail is open for use. The IAPTF and trail volunteers also met with the town boards of New Hope and Belmont that were affected by the newly established trail.

Both Portage and Waupaca County Parks Departments have also been enthusiastic about the development of the Ice Age NST. In the mid-80s, the Portage County Park Commission and Waupaca County Parks and Recreation Committee passed resolutions in support of the trail. They also incorporated the trail into their current Outdoor Recreation Plans: Waupaca County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 1987; and Portage County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 1990-1995 Update, 1990. Even though funding is limited, both counties contribute staff time and materials to support trail volunteer efforts to build, develop and maintain existing trail.

In 1991, the WDNR released the 1991-1996 Wisconsin Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). SCORP discusses the need for trail in both Portage and Waupaca Counties. It identifies hiking, walking and running trails to be high priorities. In fact, in the Lake Michigan District, which includes Waupaca County, hiking trails are determined to be the highest priority. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail will go a long way to fulfill this recreational need found in both counties.